

STATE OF MONTANA

BRIAN SCHWEITZER
GOVERNOR



JOHN BOHLINGER
LT. GOVERNOR

August 27, 2007

Montana Board of Livestock
301 North Roberts,
Scott Hart Building
PO Box 202001
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Board Members:

I want to thank each of you and the department employees for doing what was necessary to preserve Montana's brucellosis free status during the recent brucellosis investigation effort. The department made the best of a difficult situation.

As you are well aware, according to USDA rules, Montana must now endure two years without discovery of another positive animal. At my request, Dr. John Clifford, USDA APHIS Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Services, met with me in June to discuss ways that Montana could work proactively to retain its brucellosis status. Dr. Clifford described split-state status, a mitigation management tool previously unknown to us. In August, Dr. Clifford provided us with the 11 factors USDA uses for evaluation of split-state status.

It is my understanding that the implementation of split-state status would occur only in the event of a brucellosis-positive animal in the area near Yellowstone Park, in which case we would be faced with two choices: loss of the entire state's status, or implementation of a split-state format.

Protection of Montana's brucellosis-free status is an absolute priority. Dr. Clifford has presented an alternative to loss of status for the entire state. I believe it is incumbent upon us to explore every possible avenue to avoid a downgrade in status. That is why I am asking you to analyze the 11 factors for the evaluation of split-state status, and to develop alternatives for the details necessary under each factor. I trust that you will work with the livestock industry to determine an appropriate course of action.

Sincerely,


BRIAN SCHWEITZER
Governor